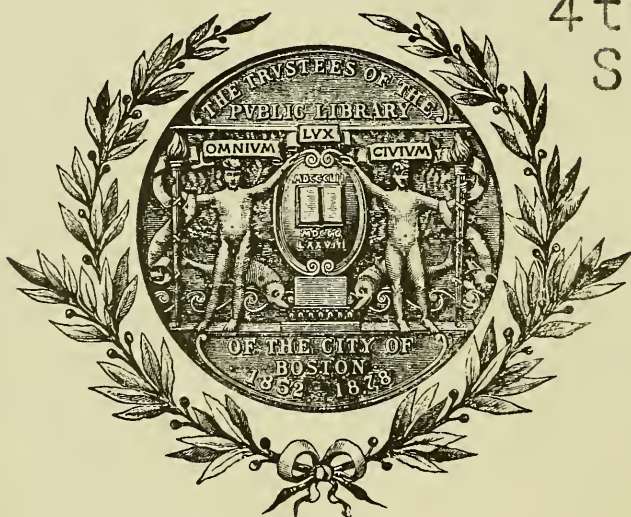


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A PLEA FOR SINCERITY

IN

RELIGIOUS THOUGHT.

BY

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AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,

BOSTON.
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“The object of the American Unitarian Association shall be to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christianity ; and all Unitarian Christians shall be invited to unite and co-operate with it for that purpose.” — ARTICLE I. *of the By-Laws of the American Unitarian Association.*

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A PLEA FOR SINCERITY IN RELIGIOUS THOUGHT.

I.

THE Presbyterian General Assembly of the United States (1898) has just taken a notable position, which marks an epoch in religious history. I refer to its action in the case of Prof. Arthur C. McGiffert, of Union Theological Seminary, New York City, in answer to a petition that he be tried for heresy. Professor McGiffert has recently published a book, entitled "The Apostolic Age," in which conclusions respecting the origin and character of the New Testament writings and theories of the person and message of Jesus are stated, which contradict the cardinal teachings of the Westminster Confession. It is not to the point to say that many of the opinions here set forth are generally accepted by leading specialists in Biblical criticism and historical scholarship. They strike at the vital and central principles of Presbyterian theology; and the Presbyterian Church cannot ignore so serious a matter.

What the General Assembly has done is this: *It has raised the question of honor, which ought to be sufficient.* It would be sufficient anywhere else but in church circles. In what we call the worldly world, when a man reaches a position out of harmony with his associates, he does not

try to force himself upon them. The Presbyterians, in appealing to the sense of honor, have taken both a manly and a politic position. This marks the beginning of a new era; it ought no longer to be necessary to prosecute a man for heresy. The Assembly practically says to Professor McGiffert: "You know just what our Presbyterian doctrines are. If you have reached different views, we appeal to you as an honorable man quietly to leave our fellowship. Conform to our standards or openly withdraw from our church. That is the only kindness to us, the only loyalty to your new views, the only path of self-respect, the surest means of progress, if that is what you seek, and the truest service to morality in general." This is wise and wholesome. It frees the problem from evasion, confusion, bitterness, and injustice.

The importance of this step cannot be over-estimated. It marks a turning-point in church history. The Assembly has covered itself with glory. *The tonic breath of a diviner air blows through this dismal and noxious region.* Let the question of honor be pressed. Let all men in the position of Professor McGiffert be urged to take this matter into the court of absolute sincerity and pass judgment upon themselves. The fundamental question is not, What liberty does the Confession permit? but, What does loyalty to the truth demand? Greater than the fortune of the Presbyterian Church, and more urgent than progress, is the necessity for integrity. The problem is now where it ought to be, not in the hands of inquisitors nor in the keeping of mere casuists, but at the bar of personal honor.

II.

And yet, there are some who strenuously plead for another course. Prominent religious teachers urge ministers to ignore their ordination vows and openly preach doctrines absolutely contrary to the unrevised creeds of the churches of which they are servants. Those who take this position condemn the practice of believing one thing and preaching another. They advocate sincerity; but they hold that it is perfectly honest for an Episcopal rector to read the Prayer Book and at the same time preach against the resurrection. It is perfectly honest for a Presbyterian minister to denounce Calvinism and recite the Confession. It is perfectly honest for a Methodist clergyman to teach salvation by righteousness in place of the doctrine of salvation by grace, as laid down in the Book of Discipline. All this, to me, is a more dangerous form of insincerity than the crude deception of the common hypocrite.

But this policy has recently been advocated by several editorials in the "Outlook." The following statements have there been made: "We say, therefore, to every liberal minister in a conservative church, Stay where you are, and preach the truth as God gives you to see the truth, without fear, without favor. . . . We advise the Presbyterian to remain in the church in which he has been brought up, and preach the freedom of faith for which his Puritan ancestry were willing to lay down their lives." ("Outlook," Feb. 5, 1898, p. 315.) "That liberty [freedom of growth] is explicitly and in terms provided for by all such as have creeds to which their clergy subscribe. . . . In whatever Protestant pulpit you may stand you are entitled to liberty." ("Outlook," March 19, 1898, pp. 710, 711.) "The very question at

issue is this: Shall a liberal minister in a conservative church withdraw, or shall he go on preaching his liberalism and leave on his brethren in the church the responsibility of determining whether they will exclude him from their communion? We counsel the latter course." ("Outlook," April 9, p. 908.)

III.

The problem in debate is too important for personal passion or petty controversy, too serious for indifference or levity, and too sacred to be approached except with the profoundest moral earnestness. And the point involved in this discussion is shortly to become the storm-centre of the religious world. The momentous question, soon to be forced upon the churches, is not the truth or utility of this or that particular dogma, but the far deeper and more important question. Are we to have frankness or duplicity, sincerity or dishonesty, in our pulpits? The time is near at hand when the common people will demand perfect manliness and unequivocal speech on the part of religious teachers. All parties will some day insist that the only dangerous heresy is insincerity. The minister must be as open-minded and as candid in speech as the scientist.

Do the Creeds grant Liberty? My disagreement with those who take the position advocated by the "Outlook" is most decisive and radical. It lies at this point: Is the Orthodox minister, whose ordination vow binds him to a definite creed, written or implied, given perfect liberty of growth and complete freedom of progress? I contend that such is not the case, and therefore, if he ignore his ordination vow and preach other doctrines, he does what

is essentially immoral. He violates a solemn compact; he outrages a sacred obligation; he profanes a holy trust. Therefore my criticism pertains, first, to a question of fact, and then to a problem in ethics. In passing, let me say that I do not presume to pass judgment upon the motives of individuals; I condemn positions and policies. And while I wish to plead my cause with earnestness, I desire to remember the duty of charity and shun the appearance of self-righteousness.

It is asserted that liberty of opinion and freedom of growth are fully provided for in all the creeds. The language is: "Liberty [freedom of growth] is explicitly and in terms provided for by all such as have creeds to which their clergy subscribe." This is a most astonishing statement. It is contradicted by the creeds themselves, by the teachings of history, and by our common knowledge.

Why are Creeds made? The plain, obvious, and central reason for having a creed is to make belief uniform and permanent, — to prevent changes of faith. Doctrines are formulated to be maintained, not to be set aside. One does not hoop a barrel simply to have its hoops broken. Those who believe in religious progress do not make creeds. They have convictions, but these convictions are allowed to remain flexible and subject to growth. The Augsburg and Westminster divines did not intend to manufacture a vehicle of religious development that would carry the church beyond their own theological positions. They were not creating a method for the outgrowth of their own ideas. They were devising a barrier against changes. Protestant liberty involved vastly more than they realized, but to them it did not mean freedom of opinion. Their creed-making and their persecution of dissenters amply prove this. We must

not credit them with motives which are the product of later ages.

Let the Creeds speak. Look into the creeds themselves. In all the confessions in Schaff's ponderous volumes, entitled "The Creeds of Christendom," there is not one article that grants liberty to outgrow the creed. Do you anywhere read: "All those who subscribe this creed may outgrow it as soon as possible"? Is it anywhere written: "Use your reason freely, and lay hold of a better religious belief as soon as possible"? Did you ever hear any one in an Orthodox Church recite this *credo*: "I believe in the freedom of the soul to outgrow the established forms of religious faith"? You cannot find it, or any equivalent, in a single Orthodox manual. It would be an absurdity from the Orthodox point of view to tolerate such an attitude toward a revealed system of infallible doctrines such as Evangelicals claim to possess. The creeds insist on being believed, and not on being outgrown. The Prayer Book does not keep an open door before every young rector, inviting him to pass beyond the Apostles' Creed. This would be utterly irrational as long as Episcopalians base the Prayer Book upon a supernatural revelation.

The Verdict of History. The contention is not supported by the facts of history. The creeds have not been helps, but grave hindrances to human development. We may admit their beneficent services in other directions, but they have neither allowed growth nor sanctioned progress. They claim to be the statements of revealed and final truths; and as such, they have been a bond limiting the freedom of the mind. They have blocked the way of every discoverer. They have made the progress of knowledge a bloody pathway to martyrdom. Can any one read Andrew D. White's "Warfare

of Science," and then say that the creeds grant perfect freedom of thought and encourage progress? The multiplication of sects completes the disproof of the assumption. Why a dozen kinds of Presbyterians, if the Confession allows complete freedom? Why a score of different Methodist churches, if the Methodist pulpit is the freest of all places? Why this constant march of dissenters out of the old churches, if the creed provides ample room for growth? For a long period I annually met scores of university students in painful trouble at this point. Why all those tragic and pathetic experiences in making their way to a larger spiritual life, if creeds are so very hospitable to progress in theology?

The Westminster Confession. We must appreciate the creed-makers, though we reject their dogmas; but the obligation to appreciate all that is good in other churches does not include commendation of those who juggle with the terms of ancient standards. To be charitable to all churches, it is not necessary to ignore real distinctions or to pretend that creeds are really different from what they are. Also, we may well emphasize the things common to all faiths, but we must not commend those who are unfaithful to the creed under whose banner they march.

In determining what the Westminster Confession really allows in the line of freedom and progress, we must consider the conditions under which it was produced. The question is not: What can I make it mean by a little twisting and stretching here and there? but, What was the intention of the men who framed it? And it is perfectly clear what they tried to do. They assumed to tabulate the scheme of salvation as revealed in Scripture. They did this to establish the true faith; to make belief

uniform and permanent. They looked upon the central dogmas as finalities. They did not expect them ever to be outgrown. They opened no door to free inquiry. They granted no freedom of growth. They were not advocates of progress in religion. They made this Confession to be believed; and they provided in the instrument itself stringent methods, not for its outgrowth, but for its enforcement. It is only in recent times, under the pressure of scientific discovery and the modern spirit, that men have sought in it authority for progress or liberty.

How much Freedom? But there are men among us who contend: I am free, because the Confession allows me to appeal from it to Scripture! But how much does this really mean? Freedom to set aside the Confession? Certainly not, although this alone is adequate liberty. For no scientific student would feel himself free unless at liberty to outgrow the text-book that he uses. This provision of the Confession means: Freedom to study the Bible, on condition that you confirm the essentials of the Confession! This is all the Westminster divines expected. If they had believed in more liberty, they would not have made a creed.

But suppose that I study the Bible freely and find no Trinity there. Thousands have reached this conclusion. Now, my point is this: If my study of Scripture compels me to reject the Trinity, does the Confession give me the right to preach my new conviction in a Presbyterian pulpit? I say most emphatically, "No." Then I press the issue: Men are not sufficiently free unless they have that privilege. Suppose, again, that my study shows me that Jesus never taught the dogma of Blood Atonement. Does the Confession give me liberty to proclaim that discovery from a Presbyterian pulpit? One might as well

claim that our Federal constitution allows an American citizen to take up arms against the United States! And yet I must be able to follow the truth faithfully and fearlessly to be perfectly free. But to preach in opposition to sacrificial redemption in a Presbyterian church is immoral. It is a violation of ordination vows. The church would honor itself by the expulsion of any minister attempting it.

Here is another case: Should my free study of the Bible convince me that it does not claim to be infallible, does the Confession grant me liberty to preach that discovery? As a matter of fact, the Bible makes no such claim for itself, but that claim is the basis on which the Confession is built. So that no man can honorably remain in a Presbyterian pulpit and teach that the Bible contains errors, or argue that it does not claim infallibility for itself. And yet a man does not have liberty enough, unless he has freedom to tell the world frankly what he finds in the Scriptures. He is not perfectly free, when he cannot teach what he discovers the Bible to be. The only liberty worth having is freedom to follow Truth though text and creed be left behind. On the other hand, the Confession gives no man a right to teach a view of Scripture which destroys its fundamental assumption that the Bible is infallible. And an increasing number of great scholars tell us that the Bible is not, and does not claim to be, what the Confession assumes it to be. But these discoveries a Presbyterian minister cannot teach without becoming disloyal to his church.

Can a Presbyterian ignore the Atonement? The Confession asserts that man is alone saved by the imputed merits of Jesus. This is a cardinal doctrine in that document. But this doctrine is abhorrent to many people to-day, and they find no adequate support for it

in Scripture, while both science and ethics condemn it. And while I would like to see this false view of God's providence and Jesus' ministry cast out from every creed, I insist that as long as a man stands in a Presbyterian pulpit, he is in honor bound to teach it. The Confession gives him no liberty to set it aside. The moral law gives him no liberty to ignore his ordination vow. If he take into that pulpit a humanitarian view of Jesus, if he reject the expiatory theory of Jesus' death, he subjects himself to the charge of insincerity.

The Congregationalists. The argument here set forth is forcibly strengthened by an appeal to the history of the Congregationalists. The early Independents were Calvinists, but in their covenants they left the door of progress open. They expected growth and provided for it. This was the chief point at issue between them and the Westminster divines. But later, many New England Congregational churches tied themselves up to creeds. They became to some extent *Presbyterianized*. And from this change have come the troubles of the Congregationalists in this country, — troubles that have to some extent been escaped by the more liberal and less creedal Independents in England. One of these disturbances was the division into Orthodox and Unitarian, early in this century; the Unitarians being truer to the primary principles of Independency. Out of this creedal root have come the Andover perplexities and perversities: the inevitable growth disguising itself behind obsolete phrases and stultifying itself by repeated subscriptions to outgrown creeds. All this painful history of the controversy between Andover Seminary and the American Board shows how prolific of heartache, repression, dissension, and even duplicity, the system of creed subscription really is.

And while the Congregational are the freest Evangelical churches among us, nevertheless, each minister, as a rule, is committed at his ordination to a definite system of theology, which he is not expected to outgrow. The recent case of Dr. William J. Long at Cambridge, Mass. [June, 1898], affords forcible confirmation of this statement. Each local church has, as a rule, a formal creed, to which candidates for admission are expected to assent as a finality. Congregationalists are not welcomed into pew or pulpit with explicit command to grow and outgrow, or with definite encouragement to use reason freely as supreme authority. And this is the only condition of perfect religious freedom. For the privilege to go as far as texts permit, the limits set up by creed and council, is not worthy the great and sacred name of liberty. Congregationalists could easily achieve absolute independence and perfect freedom; and many of us would rejoice mightily if they would do this. But at present their pulpits are, as a rule, under bonds.

As a result of the conditions to which reference has been made, we find some Congregational ministers holding in private a form of theology at variance with the creed of their own churches, but never frankly and publicly proclaiming it. People are often admitted into the church with a private understanding that they need not believe many things in the old creed, while as far as the public is aware they are loyal advocates of that old creed. What I charge is that these conditions and practices destroy sincerity without granting adequate liberty. On the other hand, the English Presbyterians, never tied up to such a creed as the Westminster Confession, have, by their quiet and steady progress, shown how freedom can be so provided that the religious life may freely

expand without violent revolt or destructive insincerity. Many of the English Presbyterian churches are now openly and honestly in fellowship with the Unitarian movement, but without change of name.

IV.

Authority of the Bible. We come now to another phase of this problem. Is liberty, circumscribed by Scripture, adequate? The writer in the "Outlook" (and he probably represents many others) contends that the Orthodox minister has perfect liberty, and can preach anything that he sees fit without subjecting himself to the charge of insincerity, because he is free to appeal from the creed to the teaching of the Bible. The creed itself guarantees him liberty because it commands him to test every article "*by the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scriptures.*"

But is this contention true? To conform belief to texts, to limit inquiry to the teachings of Isaiah and Paul, to make the Bible final authority, — this may be all the freedom that some people want. But it is only the liberty of the chained eagle and the caged lion! This bondage to texts had to be broken before scientific progress could be made. The Bible final authority? Our scientists all appreciate it, but not one in a hundred considers it a supernatural revelation, and not one in a thousand uses its texts as final authority. The astronomer does not refer to Scripture before accepting what he sees through his telescope. That day has passed. As between texts and facts of observation, he does not hesitate for a moment. The moral teachings of the Bible at the best are sublime, but to abolish slavery the modern conscience had to resort to a higher oracle than Scrip-

ture. While men wore its precepts as yokes, so-called witches were cruelly killed; but when jurists put aside the dogma of Biblical infallibility, then the science of law began. What liberty do I have, if against my conscience I must believe that God sent a lying spirit to deceive Ahab? What freedom do I possess, if against my reason I must believe that God commanded the slaughter of the Midianites?

The Bondage of Texts. Let me emphasize three things: (1) The man who is only free to go as far as texts will permit him is in bondage, — a bondage which had to be destroyed before what we call modern civilization could appear. (2) The Biblical text has ceased to be a final authority in many of the most precious realms of human thought and activity. It is simply impossible to translate all of Scripture into life. The final authority in religion, as in every other department of life, is reason and conscience in appeal to the facts of the universe, in which God resides and presides. Scripture is authoritative only so far as it records the essential laws of life. The ultimate authority is in those laws, not in its language. It is invaluable as a help to the religious life, if rationally and reverently used, but harmful if used to limit thought and restrain love. (3) The Bible itself does not claim to be an infallible authority. It nowhere demands that we confine ourselves to its teachings. The Bible is infinitely better than a revelation with final and absolute authority; it is a wonderful religious literature to be used for instruction and inspiration.

Who is Free? The only man who is perfectly free is he who obeys the living Holy Spirit! We must have liberty to test the creeds by an appeal to the Spirit of God, revealed in the life that now is! The free soul demands a Living God, who still speaks, not a vanished

God, who once spoke. Men say: I am free because I must believe what the Bible teaches! But is it not barely possible that God has spoken a fresh word to humanity in the last two thousand years? Is it not barely possible that God has had as much to do in writing Whittier's poems as in producing the imprecatory psalms, in building a telescope as in erecting Solomon's temple, in the medical discoveries of Jenner and Lister as the sanitary laws of Leviticus? He only is free who is at liberty to believe and live all that God reveals in the ever unfolding discoveries and achievements of humanity.

Is God a Father? And let me call attention for a moment to the inhuman implications of the claim so often put forward in behalf of the Bible: "It alone has saving truth." When I read this sweeping claim for Hebrew texts, I feel my heart growing hot with indignation, and, with a sense of outraged sympathy, I cry: Shame on you for proclaiming a monstrous dogma which consigns a majority of my brethren to blackest night and infinite torment. This is intolerable injustice; this is unthinkable cruelty.

Just so far as you push this claim for the Bible, which it does not make for itself, that far you rule out millions of people from the reach of mercy into the doom of endless misery, — people that your love would save, but whom you sacrifice to the demands of a heartless creed. What a horrible thing to make the countless millions forsaken orphans to whom God sends no loving message! What a horrible thing to set aside as destitute of divine helpfulness Plato's Dialogues, Buddha's Plea for Love, and Zoroaster's mighty Oracles for truth! What a horrible thing to strip God of real Fatherhood, and represent him as so indifferent to the majority of his family that he has sent them no description of the way to heaven!

Good people make this claim for the Bible, but it seems to me a terrible statement, full of practical atheism. The matter at stake is not the value of the Bible, which may be loved tenderly and fruitfully used apart from this loveless dogma, but the central question is: Has God any paternal providence and man any real sonship?

V.

The Question of Honor. But I wish most of all to insist upon the ethical aspects of this problem under discussion. I contend that it is immoral for a minister to preach "new theology" under the flag of the old theology, because the creed grants no such liberty. It is immoral to subscribe the Confession and then teach different doctrines, because the appeal to Scripture allowed does not warrant an abandonment of central dogmas. No matter how acceptable this course may be to some parishioners, it leads downward to moral degeneracy. Though the creed may have become a dead letter to many, the practice of preaching one system of doctrines, while still publicly pledged to another, is a quick method of spiritual death.

Let me make this matter a little clearer and stronger. Suppose, for example, that you are a Baptist minister. Your ordination vow, though you may not have signed an elaborate creed, compels you to baptize by immersion in the name of the Trinity. Is it reasonable to hold that when Baptists ordained you, they freely granted you liberty to outgrow immersion and set aside the Trinity? Most certainly not. And yet, those who approve the editorials in the "Outlook" contend: Stay in the Baptist pulpit and freely preach that immersion is needless and

the Trinitarian belief erroneous. But I say that such a course is dishonest and dishonorable; and I believe that I have the manly and earnest people of all creeds with me. For by that action you violate a sacred trust; you murder truth at the altar; you encourage men to think all religion a farce. As long as you are the minister of that Baptist church, you must immerse members entering the church. Is it honest for you to do this, and then go into the pulpit and speak against immersion? You must use the Trinitarian formula in that rite. Is it honest for you to repeat those words that imply a belief in a triune God, and in the next breath tell the candidate that you have outgrown the Trinitarian dogma? This would be the destruction of religion.

Orthodox Obligations. The ordination vows made by every man who goes into an Orthodox pulpit bind him to preach, as long as he occupies that pulpit, certain doctrines, described in creed, confession, or book of discipline. It is assumed that the scheme of theology imposed is, in its cardinal principles, the final and absolute form of religious truth. As Unitarians, we condemn such creed subscription. We insist that dogmas are not the proper basis of religious organization. But as long as this system prevails, we contend that a man should be loyal to his obligation: Believe or leave! And as long as a man sincerely believes the creed to which he subscribes, he must command universal respect. However narrow his creed, this man is himself safe, and he exerts a saving influence. I am always glad to feel that there is a surplus of truth in all creeds, and a majority of saints in all communions.

When, however, a minister outgrows the creed and rejects essential and important parts of it, the only honorable course is to leave that pulpit. There must be no

hesitancy, no quibbling, no duplicity. When he ceases to believe the creed upon which the church is based, he is in honor bound to leave the church. We may rejoice that a man has outgrown his creed, but we cannot rejoice that he has so outgrown the moral law that he ignores his ordination vows. We may be glad that a man has made progress in religion, but there is something better even than progress, and that is sincerity. No one has made true progress who is disloyal to the principles to which the pulpit in which he stands is dedicated. The most alarming sign of our time is the fact that any one should for a moment think or act otherwise.

It is from this position of common honesty that any man falls when he gives the following advice: "We say, therefore, to every liberal minister in a conservative church: Stay where you are and preach the truth as God gives you to see the truth, without fear, without favor." And he might have added: But with dishonor and the contempt of all earnest people! Most excellent counsel, if those ministers had not taken a solemn vow to do something exactly different. Entirely proper, if they had not pledged themselves not to change their opinions. A worthy course, if the pulpits in which they stand were not dedicated to definite doctrines, to the teaching of which they themselves were solemnly set apart.

Loyalty to our Flag. When I see "old glory" at the masthead, I have a right to infer that loyal Union sailors are on board. If, in case of war with Spain, I should find that they were Spanish tars, I should infer treachery. Likewise, if I see a church spire and read at the base the name "Presbyterian," I have a right to expect that the minister beneath that spire will preach in harmony with the Westminster Confession. If, on entering, I find a man who is a Unitarian except in sincerity, — a man who

repudiates the fundamental principles of Calvinism, — shall I not cry, “Shame” ?

Surprising Arguments. But the arguments and illustrations sometimes used in support of this position are most surprising. This is to be done, we are told, to secure peace. But the only peace to be so obtained is the peace of death; for if there is any manhood left in a congregation, its members will demand that their minister be loyal to the creed of the church. This is to be done, we are told, because dogmas are unimportant. But if unimportant, then proclaim it to the world. While the creed is there and you ask the minister to pledge himself to it for all time, the only honorable policy is loyalty to it. This is to be done, we are told, to allow more opportunity for instruction in righteousness. But a minister who violates his ordination vows by continuing in his pulpit after repudiating the doctrines upon which his church is based, has surrendered his commission and authority as a moral teacher.

In seeking support for this unwise and demoralizing teaching, it is asserted that it was a great misfortune that Luther left the mother church. But for one, I cannot so cover with disapproval this heroic Protestant, and ignore the blessings which his followers won for me and the rest of mankind. In like manner the separation of the Puritans from the Anglican Church is called a mistake. But I cannot so far forget my Puritan blood and cover with condemnation the glory of Hooper and Cartwright, John Milton and John Robinson.

The plea is made: No matter what creed you signed, if you reject important parts of it, preach your new thought with tact, but remain in the church built upon that creed, which you subscribed, though now you disbelieve some of its central teachings. And for warrant,

appeal is made to Paul, who, it is claimed, remained a Jewish rabbi to the end, and continued to preach his "new theology" to Jewish synagogues! A more ignoble use of Paul's great name could not be invented; an example more clearly in condemnation of this position could not be found. Paul did not remain a mere rabbi, content with the forms and faiths of the old synagogue. He went out and organized new churches upon the basis of his real faith. He forcibly set aside the old ordinances as outgrown. He did not disguise his new thought by the use of old phrases. He did not settle over a fashionable synagogue and promise to maintain the ancient faith, and then use its pulpit to proclaim a strange gospel. When he preached to Jewish congregations, he entered as a reformer might go into any public meeting, and said: The old order has come to an end, and we must build upon a new foundation.

What we expect. When I ask an Episcopal clergyman to give me something that describes the faiths and forms of his church, he hands me the Prayer Book. When I attend his church, I have a right to expect that he will preach the doctrine of the Trinity, the miraculous birth of Jesus, the blood atonement, the resurrection of the body, and the damnation of unbelievers, because these things are taught in that Prayer Book. If he should say in his sermon that Jesus was simply one of the sons of God born naturally, that there is no resurrection of the body, and that men are not saved by the blood of Christ, I should say that he is not an honest man; he has no right to occupy an Episcopal pulpit. I may be glad that he has outgrown some of the doctrines of the church, but I cannot rejoice when he solemnly reads the Prayer Book and then declares that he does not believe many things in it. His parishioners have a right to demand

that he be loyal to its doctrines. The world has a right to expect that he will obey his ordination vow. If he does not, he is as immoral as the man who sends me goods unlike the samples from which I made my order. But a position equally immoral is implied by language often heard: If you have a new truth, say it, no matter about the Prayer Book. But I say: Be loyal to the Prayer Book as long as you use it. If you have a new truth, then lay down the Prayer Book and go where you can proclaim it in freedom and with honor.

Principle and Practice. Recently an attendant at a prominent Presbyterian church said to me: "My minister rejects the Westminster Confession; and only last Sunday, he said, with great emphasis, that Calvinism is dead!" Apt pupil of the new Jesuitism! And what but this could I say: "Can it be that you approve such a state of affairs? Is it possible that you can rejoice when your minister spurns as dead that system of theology which he himself promised to preach and which is still the basis of his church? Is there no longer any honor in the land? Can you have respect for a minister who scoffs at the primary principle of the Presbyterian church and remains a camp-follower under its flag? If Calvinism is not true, then leave the church or pull down the flag." Such laymen ought to be ashamed of their complicity in dishonor.

It is no justification for the Orthodox minister to argue: "My congregation is satisfied with my liberality." For where is your conscience? Is God satisfied, when you declare from a pulpit still based on Calvinism that Calvinism is dead? No moral lethargy of a congregation can justify a minister in violating his ordination vows. This is not the way to make men honest in business or upright in politics.

Men sometimes argue: It is so commonly assumed in these parts that the creed is a dead letter that ministers are no longer under any obligation to preach its doctrines. But if dead, why not bury it? Why keep, if not to honor? Why subscribe, if not to teach? As a matter of fact, none of the great creed churches has as yet publicly abandoned its fundamental dogmas. None has as yet said to its ministers as they go into the pulpit: Preach freely whatever new truth you may find. Until public and authoritative disavowal is made of such doctrines, both pew and pulpit are involved in dishonor, if the creed is ignored. No, my friend, it is your conscience that is dead! No general acquiescence in ignoring a creed can warrant a man in preaching other doctrines, as long as the creed is the basis of the pulpit in which he stands.

Only a Matter of Emphasis? It is sometimes claimed that all that is involved in the problem under discussion is a question of emphasis! Progress is provided for under all creeds by simply changing the point of emphasis. The Confession fosters freedom, because it allows us, from age to age, to give prominence to its different elements. It is easy to adjust the old system of theology to modern thought and sentiment by placing its dogmas in a new perspective. But for one, I cannot see how a theology rooted in total depravity can be adjusted to the modern conception of human nature by any mere trick of perspective. If one theory is true, the other is false. I cannot understand how "changing the point of emphasis" can make it honest for a man, who signs a creed built upon the infallibility of the Bible, to teach that the Bible contains errors and is simply the world's best religious literature. I cannot approve the casuistry which claims that a promise to believe a definite dogma

includes the privilege of disowning that dogma at one's convenience. The Westminster Confession damns the unelect heathen. What else is there in the document that can be so emphasized as to abrogate this and slip universal salvation into its place? If courts should so interpret language, what would contracts and constitutions be worth?

Historical Continuity. There are those who find a justification for remaining in a church whose creed they have outgrown, in their devotion to the continuity of history. They love the old church as an institution, and though they do not believe its doctrines, they cannot bear to break with it or cripple its life. Its creed is only incidental; and it is better to contribute to its general life, and apparently sanction the creed, than to imperil the institution by dissent. This common argument brings into prominence one of the grave evils inherent in the creed system, which can only be abolished, not by ignoring one's ordination vow or disguising one's real belief, but by going to the root of the matter and changing the constitution of the church. The church need not, and ought not, to have tied itself to dogmas and involved itself in these misfortunes.

My reply is briefly this: (1) It is better for every interest at stake, especially for the institution itself, to be loyal, first of all, to the truth. When the truth is sacrificed, all is lost; institutions can adjust themselves to the truth. (2) The preservation of personal integrity is infinitely more precious than the promotion of historical continuity. (3) Historical continuity does not lie in insincere conformity so much as in outspoken progress. Its apostles were not the tories, but the patriots under Washington; not the friends of Erasmus, but the followers of Luther; not Douglas, who tried to compromise,

but Lincoln, who demanded instant obedience to truth and justice. If the creed is so unimportant that it may be privately ignored, this great fact about it is important enough to be clearly published. And we must always remember that our rule of conduct must be, not the apparent prosperity of an institution, but the good of humanity.

What is Intolerable? I wish to be tolerant toward every form of earnest and manly religious belief. Imperfect creeds we must appreciate and honor. But I am intolerant toward insincerity of every degree and under all disguises. Violation of ordination vows, the constant use of old phrases when their familiar meaning has been repudiated, teaching "new theology" under the flag of the old theology, neglect to make one's ecclesiastical position conform to one's real convictions, continuance in a church when essential elements of its creed have been rejected, — these are things that ought not to be tolerated. This insincerity is the poison that destroys all moral and spiritual life. It is not necessary that we have similar beliefs, but it is necessary that we have honest beliefs honorably espoused. I plead for co-operation among all religious bodies, but neither indifference nor insincerity is the pathway to that goal. I rejoice in religious progress, but only in a progress that is open, manly, ethically consistent.

Progress with Honor. A prominent layman in a large church recently said to me: "I propose to remain in the Presbyterian Church and keep the old fogies from running things; and I can do more for religious progress in this way than by leaving the church, though many things in the creed I do not believe." But do not those who really believe the Confession alone have the right to manage a Presbyterian church? You may keep the "old

fogies" from running the church, but can you run on the Lord's errands while pretending to believe what you do not? Are you not a poor exponent of progress in religion, while subscribing one doctrine and preaching another in the Sunday-school? The martyrs, who made the Christian Church possible, were not men who went decorously to heathen temples while believing in Jesus. The Puritans, who won great victories for freedom and humanity, were not men who tried to abolish popish vestments by going meekly with those who wore them. Darwin did not establish the theory of evolution by holding aloft the banner of Cuvier.

It is not a step forward but downward to march under the flag of Scriptural infallibility while rejecting the Bible as final authority. While our sign is Calvinism, let us keep to its wares; when we go out of that business, let us take down the sign! But it may be asked: Why not allow progress in the Presbyterian Church and permit its preachers to teach what they wish? To which I reply: Well and good, when Presbyterians so decide. But while the institution remains as now organized, claiming a final and infallible faith, it is neither loyal to it nor helpful to the world to confuse the issue and pretend that it allows perfect liberty or that its old symbols adequately describe new truths. Let those who desire progress in religion first of all commit themselves openly to the law of progress by renouncing allegiance to textual and creedal bonds.

Remember Heartaches. I do not wish to seem uncharitable or self-righteous; but with all the vehemence of my moral nature I protest against claims to liberty which are not based on fact, and against practices which obscure the points at issue, blunting moral sensibilities and producing heartaches. I remember the painful confusion of

the child who asked, "Papa, if you do not believe in hell, why do you send me to a Sunday-school where belief in hell is taught?" And in behalf of such sorrowing children, sure to be driven in this way from all religion, I enter my protest. I remember the young man whose heart had been wounded by the minister who, in private, confessed his disbelief in dogmas which he required that young man to profess in public on joining the church. In behalf of these outraged souls, demoralized by such duplicity at the altar of religion, I cry aloud in denunciation. I remember the mental and moral confusion and distress of the merchant who, when elected an elder, and asked to sign the Confession and pledge himself to dogmas that he had never believed and had never heard from the pulpit, felt the sting of hypocrisy, and realized that for years he had been, in the eyes of the community, an advocate of a creed that he did not approve. And in behalf of these distressed people, thus alienated from piety, I lift up my voice for absolute sincerity.

Sincerity, then Progress. These are the sublime truths that I learned from my revered teachers, — from Carlyle, in "Sartor Resartus;" from Martineau, in "Endeavors after a Christian Life;" from Emerson, in his "Essays;" and from Morley, in "Compromise," — the latter a noble book with a much-needed tonic for these days, when so many religious teachers play fast and loose with theological phrases until in our hot indignation we fly for relief to the denunciations hurled by Jesus at hypocrites. The man who puts a mask on both the old creed and his new conviction to make them look alike, disguising and dishonoring both, and purchasing progress at the expense of frankness and veracity, — he poisons life at its very fountain head. The minister who uses phrases in observing the rites of his church that he has to explain

away in his next sermon, commits spiritual suicide. If we have a new truth, let us clothe it in language that is clear and unambiguous. Let us not disguise God's fresh revelation to us by dressing it in the cast-off rags of an erroneous and discredited supernaturalism. We shall do well *not* to follow the advice of a popular preacher who claims that it is proper to use old phrases in a radically new sense, *provided* our hearers agree with us! But why run the risk of giving this uncertain sound? Why confuse and mislead by toying thus with ancient symbols? Let us be done with all duplicity at the altar of religion, that we may more easily enforce the moral law in the world at large. Let us enthrone sincerity in the church, that the victories for the higher life may everywhere and always be more easily and speedily won.

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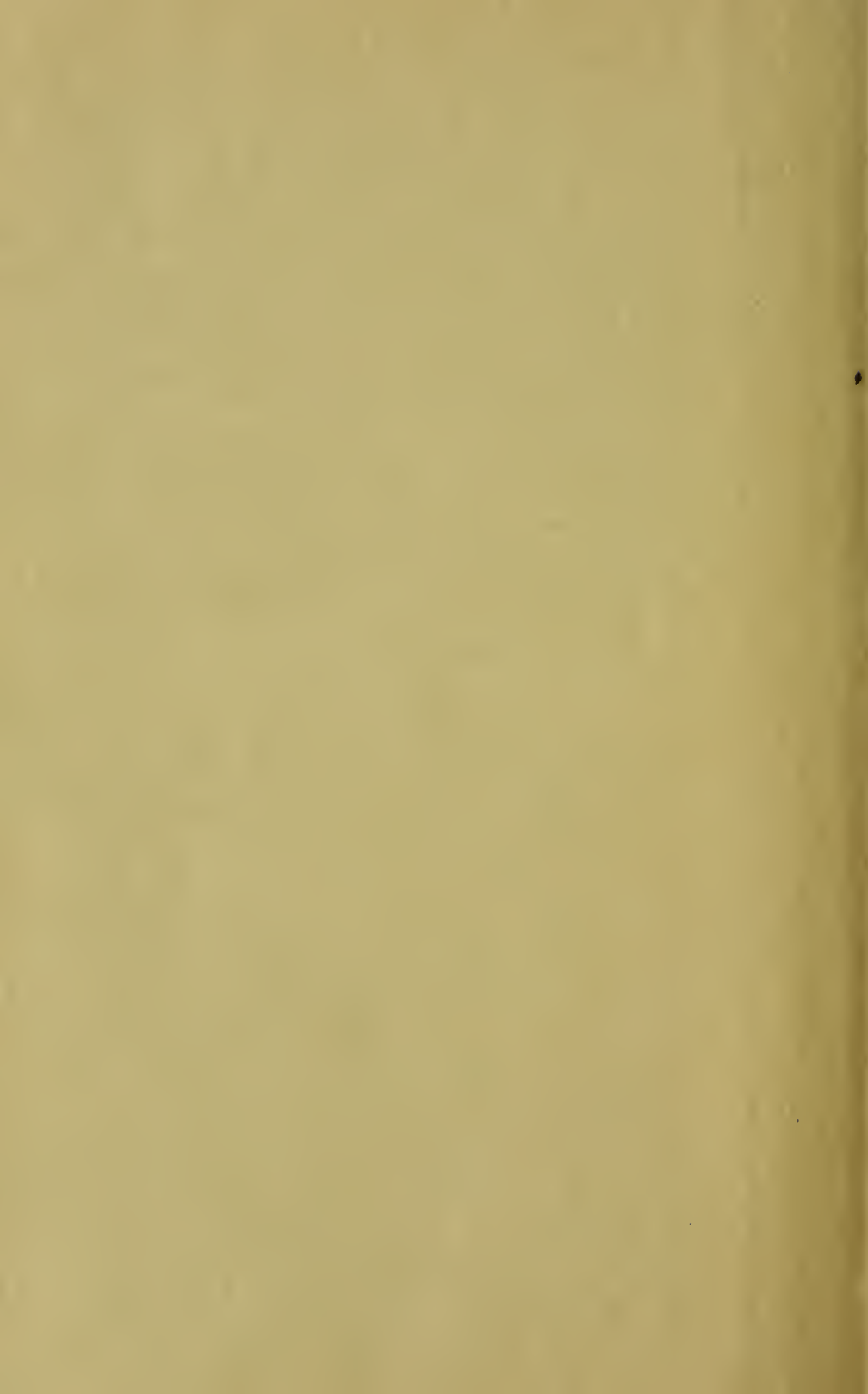
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